

Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language

Volume 7

Issue 1 *Ecotones as Contact Zones*

Article 16

2016

Tanka Reptilia

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Recommended Citation

Smith, L. (2016). Tanka Reptilia. *Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, 7(1). Retrieved from <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/landscapes/vol7/iss1/16>

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Tanka Reptilia*

Gecko on a wall
hunts moth fluttering at light
wings hang out of mouth
he licks wing—dust from his eyes
chik chaks to his velvet mates.

Legless lizard glides
menace in unblinking eye
mock snake with phony threats
beware this ruse could backfire
and cause your early demise.

Dragon lizards dash
spattering hot desert sand
hide in cool spinifex
come out to do their push-ups
vaunt their masculinity.

Heavy duty skink
a Bobtail cannot “do fast”
top speed a waddle
why aren’t you like your lithe kin
who can skitter swiftly away?

Bungarra swaggers
tongue tasting hot summer air
talons rip ant mound.
show that gritty face—tell me
who taught you this hunting trick?

-Laurie Smith

*There are five families of lizards in Australia. This quintet dedicates a tanka to each of them.

Laurie Smith is a retired zoologist. His professional experience has resulted in many publications on the distribution, ecology and systematics of terrestrial vertebrates in Western Australia and Indonesia. In 2009 and 2010 he was a Resident with SymbioticA, a research facility at University of Western Australia dedicated to artistic enquiry into knowledge and technology in the life sciences.